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178 439 contemporary material and intellectual culture which culminates in their conversion to Christianity under Roman or Byzantine auspices. It likewise witnessed an expansion of trade both in Central Europe and in the Orient, and in this commercial expansion the Slavs in general had a definite stake.

764 Though a combined evaluation of linguistic, source, and archaeological data permits a tolerably accurate and convincing appraisal of the material culture of the Slavs during the pagan period, there is no such coherent mass of evidence upon which any wholly satisfactory statement of their religious beliefs, demonology, and eschatology may be predicted. The early Slavs cremated their dead, sharing this custom with their other Indo-European neighbors (Lithuanians, Germans, Celts). Burial was adopted through foreign influence, and before the 774 various conversions both customs existed side by side. The 776 primitive pagan Slavs were animists and attributed a soul to 775 the natural elements in which they lived. They honored a supreme deity and also believed in the existence of wood, water, [782] and household spirits to which they offered sacrifices. Beside these nature spirits, they also honored the spirits of their ancestors and thus believed in a future life. They deified the 821 heavenly bodies and the great phenomena of nature (thunder, lightning, wind, rain, fire).

776 Beside these animistic and manistic beliefs, the pagan Slavs also venerated a limited number of gods, some of which were of alien origin. The organization of a veritable pantheon was carried farthest by the Western Slavs who lived along the Baltic coast, a phenomenon perhaps not unconnected with Germanic influences of early date. It is reasonably clear that all the primitive Slavs possessed a god of the thunder and lightning, though this deity, Perun, took on special importance among the Russian Slavs because of special Scandinavian influences and the importance of Thor in the Scandinavian pantheon. Among the Western Slavs, however, Perun was less dominant than the god of the shining sun, Svarog, a name apparently connected with the indo-European base **svar*, signifying "heat,

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brilliance." The Slavic sun god was also known as Dazhbog, the god which gives life and fertility, but neither appellation, curiously enough, appears among the Southern Slavs. Dazhbog is occasionally called the son of Svarog, the god of fire.

A more general Slavic deity was Veles or Volos. In the Russian *Primary Chronicle* he is characterized as "the god of cattle," but this qualification has no relation to the original attributes of Veles. It results rather from the monkish chronicler's identification of the specifically Russian form of his name (Volos) with that of Saint Blasius, a Cappadocian bishop who died a martyr's death about 315 A.D., and was extensively revered thereafter as a patron of flocks and herds. In the *Primary Chronicle,* where Perun and Veles are mentioned together as gods by whom the Scandinavian Varangians and the Slavs of Kiev swore, the implication is that the Varangians swore by Perun (here the equivalent of Thor) and the Slavs by Veles, who thus may be viewed as the guardian of oaths, a sort of *Zeus epiorkios.* The name Veles itself is cognate with various Lithuanian words meaning "corpse," "ghost," and "devil," so that Veles is rather to be considered as a god of the dead, a conclusion justified by his frequent invocation in various late Bohemian curses.

Idols were used by the Eastern Slavs, and the medieval German chroniclers describe sanctuaries which the Baltic Slavs erected to their gods. Of these the most celebrated was that at Arkona, on the island of Rugen, dedicated to the god Svantovit, whose statue adorned it. Svantovit seems merely a local variant of Svarog, the sun god, and various other local deities of the same type are mentioned in medieval non-Slavic sources. If the Slavs did honor a supreme deity, it is reasonably clear that he was a thunder or a sun god like Perun or Svarog, who would thus reflect the more or less general Indo-European belief in such a deity who appears as Zeus, Jupiter, or the old Germanic Tiuz. Only among the Baltic Slavs is the existence of a special caste of priests attested.

A final and equally interesting problem connected with the